

DCI Talking Points on Leaks for SIG(I)

14 November 1984

The publication of unauthorized disclosures of classified intelligence continues as a major security problem. I would like to meet with you next Wednesday to discuss ways to try to bring this problem under control. The result of that meeting will be a memorandum for the President indicating specific actions we will undertake as well as specific steps we offer for his consideration. Meanwhile, I have sent the President a letter highlighting the gravity of the situation and requesting his renewed support in reestablishing the discipline in the government that is needed to keep our intelligence secrets secure.

I have brought copies of that letter, which I want you to read at this meeting and return to me. During the coming week, I ask that you consider what actions we need to take. I have asked the Chairman of the Security Committee to prepare a draft SIG(I) memorandum which reflects our views. This will be provided to each of you at the week's end. At next Wednesday's meeting, you should be prepared to contribute your advice and counsel regarding the final form this memorandum to the President should take.

Before we turn to our scheduled business, I'd like to pass on to you a couple of thoughts about unauthorized disclosures of classified intelligence information.

First, regardless of what we recommend, there is a grave need for the means to sort out unauthorized disclosures from policy statements which may derive from intelligence sources and methods. It appears that those concerned with policy may lose sight of the need to protect the invaluable intelligence that provides a basis for the policy.

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Any Presidential directive on this subject should not only forbid disclosure of classified intelligence, but also must establish a mechanism to process requests for the use of intelligence in unclassified statements. It is clear that simply saying "Thou shalt not leak" one more time is not enough. There has to be a mechanism in the Executive Branch to ensure that the risks are known when someone wants to use or "declassify" intelligence information.

Furthermore, the President's power to punish leakers is presumably limited to discharging those Federal employees who divulge classified information.

We need to generate Congressional support for legislation that will clearly make it a crime to divulge classified intelligence information publically. Anything less is vulnerable to criticism as Administration vindictiveness against those who want the public to be informed. It will be difficult to have such a law enacted. But it can be done if we properly prepare the Congress and the public by raising their awareness of the numbers of unauthorized publications of classified intelligence that are occurring.

I ask you to consider these points and the others that I have made in my letter to the President and prepare yourselves to assist in this effort.